



State Senator Robert Garton District 41



REPUBLICAN LEGISLATORS URGE ISTEP REFORM

Republican legislators recently unveiled a plan to change the ISTEP+ testing date from the fall to the spring, shorten the length of the test and provide students, parents and teachers with results more quickly.

Currently students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 take the exams in early September, only a few weeks after the start of the school year. GOP legislators would like to see the test moved to the spring to enable teachers to better utilize the results for curriculum evaluation, classroom placement and timely remediation.

A recent survey commissioned by Project E, an Indianapolis-based non-profit education group, showed 87 percent of school principals and school board members and 93 percent of teachers supported moving the exam to the spring. Nearly 95 percent of teachers supported restructuring the exam to make it shorter and decrease the time it takes to receive the results.

The ISTEP+ tests math and language arts skills with a series of multiple choice questions as well as a written portion. The written portion of the exam is of particular concern as it adds a great deal of time to both administration and grading of the exam. This is one reason why there is a long delay for students to receive the results of the test.

Indiana's testing turnaround time is one of the longest in the country.

Currently, it can take more than 3-4 months for students, parents, and teachers to obtain the results of the ISTEP+. Many legislators are advocating that teachers and parents receive faster results from the ISTEP+ so they can use individual test scores to identify and address the academic areas where a child needs help.

Legislators are concerned that with Indiana leading the nation in jobs lost, bankruptcies and mortgage foreclosures, and trailing the other 49 states in job creation, Indiana shouldn't be trailing behind in education as well.

Republicans are hoping to create a bipartisan public debate on improvement of the test. Even though the majority of education professionals in Indiana support ISTEP+ reform, the debate should involve parents, teachers and the legislative branch in a mutual effort aimed at improvement in order to better Hoosier children and our state.

Garton represents District 41, which includes Bartholomew County and portions of Johnson and Shelby counties.

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